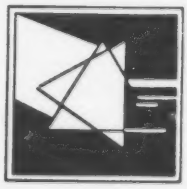
FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION CYCLE UNDERLYING THE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE PLAN



ALBERTA SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION

Alberta
EDUCATION

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:

THE MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION CYCLE UNDERLYING THE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE PLAN

January, 1988

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I. INTRODUCTION

The videotape, *"A Framework for Action," outlines the components of the Management of Education Cycle underlying the Management and Finance Plan (MFP). The cycle continues to be employed by Alberta Education in setting priorities and providing direction to improve the quality of education in Alberta.

This paper complements the material presented in the videotape by:

(a) describing the Management of Education Cycle underlying MFP; and,

(b) providing further direction to school boards for using the Management of Education Cycle in their jurisdictions.

It is believed that the use of this cycle will assist school boards in providing the best possible educational service to their jurisdictions by:

(a) presenting a dynamic, purposeful, and workable approach to the management of a school jurisdiction and to the provision of a quality education for students;

(b) presenting a flexible approach to the management of education that respects the differences among school jurisdictions and enables them to meet unique local needs;

(c) presenting a Management of Education Cycle similar to Alberta Education's, that has the potential for improving communication;

(d) assisting boards to use limited resources to achieve enhanced, effective and efficient management;

(e) assisting boards to provide enhanced leadership through the development of an effective management approach; and,

(f) enabling boards to understand their role, and the roles of other key actors, in the management of their school jurisdictions.

* Copies of the videotape can be obtained from:
- Executive Director, Alberta School Trustees' Association (482-7311).

II. MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION CYCLE

A. Description of Management of Education Cycle

This cycle comprises six interactive components. As identified in Figure I, p. 3, these components are:

(1) Strategic Planning;
(2) Developing Required Policies and Programs;
(3) Operational Planning and Budgeting;
(4) Implementing;
(5) Monitoring, Evaluating, Auditing, and Adjusting; and,
(6) Communicating.

The present cycle does not correspond precisely with that of the videotape, "A Framework for Action." Implementing, formerly subsumed under Operational Planning, is now identified as a separate component. Auditing has been added to the monitoring and evaluating component of the cycle because it is integral to the review process. Adjusting has been included in the monitoring, evaluating, and auditing component, as it is a consequence of those activities. Communicating, while continuing to be recognized as important at every stage of the cycle, is also shown as a component that provides for the dissemination and discussion of educational results.

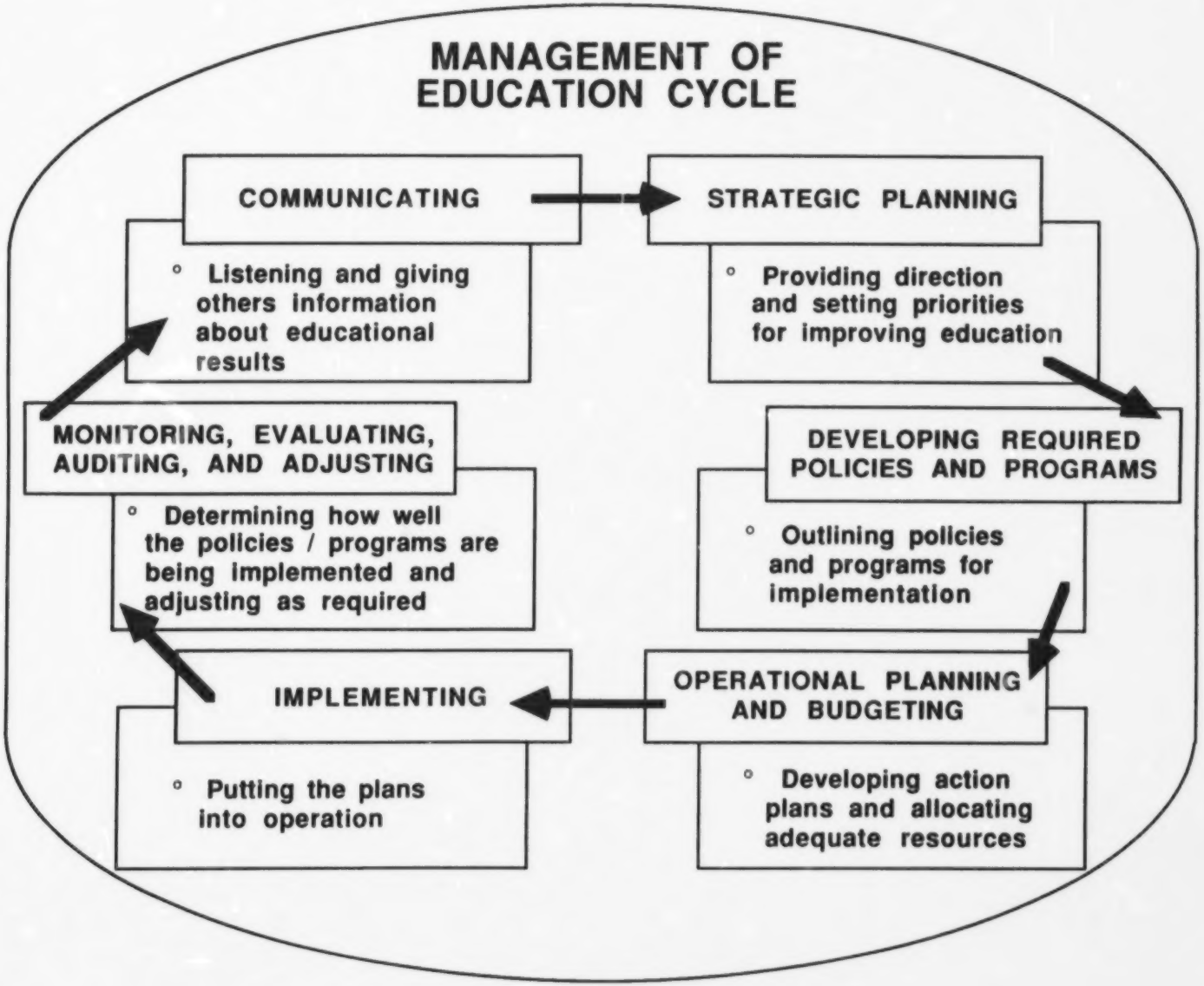

MANAGEMENT OF EDUCATION CYCLE
COMMUNICATING
° Listening and giving others information about educational results
STRATEGIC PLANNING
° Providing direction and setting priorities for improving education
DEVELOPING REQUIRED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS
° Outlining policies and programs for implementation
OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING
° Developing action plans and allocating adequate resources
IMPLEMENTING
° Putting the plans into operation
MONITORING, EVALUATING, AUDITING, AND ADJUSTING
° Determining how well the policies / programs are being implemented and adjusting as required

Figure 1: The Management of Education Cycle

B. Description of Components of Management of Education Cycle

The following description of the six components of the cycle will use the school jurisdiction as the frame of reference.

The emphasis in the cycle is on a purposeful and cooperative approach to the management of education. However, educational leaders must balance the need for decisive action and the need for the effective participation of stakeholders in educational decision-making. Where issues require immediate resolution and the opportunity for consultation is not available, it is expected that educational leaders will continue to make decisions that are in the best interests of their students.

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

- Providing direction and setting priorities for improving education

a. Definition of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning involves the development of a vision statement that describes a preferred future for education in the jurisdiction. Strategic planning also involves the development of a framework for action, or strategies, to realize that future.

b. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a primary responsibility of board members, assisted by the superintendent and the secretary-treasurer. Within the framework established by legislation and government policies, the board provides leadership and direction, as well as sets priorities for improving education in a jurisdiction.

Due to the importance of the strategic planning process, all board members, including those newly elected, should receive adequate inservice in this key area.

The following questions provide a useful starting point for the strategic planning process:

(1) Where is the school jurisdiction now?

(2) Where should the school jurisdiction be heading and what should it be accomplishing in the future?

(3) How does the school jurisdiction get from where it is now to where it wants to be, in terms of its preferred future?

The school board, the superintendent, and the secretary-treasurer, in co-operation with stakeholders, may address these questions by working through the following key steps in the strategic planning process:

(1) Analysis of the jurisdiction's unique, local needs.

(2) Analysis of how well the jurisdiction has met those needs, identifying both strengths and weaknesses.

(3) Review of future-oriented data, including such items as financial and enrolment projections, and social, economic, educational and policy trends and issues which have implications for the education provided in the school jurisdiction.

(4) Development of a vision statement for the jurisdiction's preferred educational future.

(5) Development of a long-term, multi-year plan that outlines the goals and priorities whereby the jurisdiction will work toward achieving the preferred future outlined in the vision statement.

(6) Review of the vision statement, goals and priorities with school jurisdiction staff and other key, external stakeholders.

The development of a vision statement is crucial to effective strategic planning. However, attention should also be paid to corresponding stages of the process as these determine the vision statement's practicability.

The self-assessment stages of the strategic planning process (1-3, above) usually identify problems or issues to be addressed if the preferred future described in the vision statement is to be achieved. However, these issues will be of varying significance and should be prioritized accordingly. For instance, special attention should be given to the results of the review of future-oriented data (3), as some of these may impact directly on the capacity of the jurisdiction to achieve its preferred future.

If a jurisdiction does not have the immediate capacity to carry out the intent of its vision statement, the vision can still remain intact. Short-term goals that are consistent with the long-term goals outlined in the vision statement can be addressed.

c. Major Outcomes

Strategic planning should have a beginning and an ending point for each year; it should produce outcomes which move the jurisdiction in the direction of its preferred future; it should drive the budget development process; and, it should be concluded prior to the budget's ratification. The end products

of strategic planning will be contained in the jurisdiction's long-term, multi-year plan. This plan, and the strategies outlined in it, will vary according to the size, capacity, and needs of a jurisdiction.

As the board and the superintendent work through the Management of Education Cycle, they will need to return to the strategic plan to ensure that it is revised and updated. Even though the plan will have been compiled to provide direction and set priorities for a period of up to five years, **revising and updating should still occur at least annually.** This is because planning is a dynamic process, both responsive to the changing world and yet a shaping force that anticipates and contributes to building a preferred future.

2. DEVELOPING REQUIRED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

- Outlining policies and programs for implementation

a. Definition of Policies and Programs

Policies are an extension of the jurisdiction's vision statement. They state what it is the jurisdiction intends to achieve and, for specific items, why the policies exist. They also provide the guidelines, procedures, or regulations for effecting the achievement. Hence, policies create the framework for the management activities of the superintendent and other employees.

Programs are policies in action. Programs may be educational in nature, as described in Alberta Education's Programs of Studies, or have a service orientation, such as with lunchroom and pupil transportation programs. Both are important and together they serve to facilitate the provision of a quality education for all students in the jurisdiction.

b. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Policy Development

As an elected body, the board is entrusted with directing the local education system and is responsible for policy development in the school jurisdiction. As with the strategic planning process, the importance of the policy development process requires that all board members, including those newly elected, receive adequate inservice in this key area.

The superintendent is involved in the policy-making process as policy writer, policy analyst and policy advisor. Being knowledgeable of the operation of the jurisdiction, the superintendent develops policy alternatives and explains their implications to the board. The superintendent also develops procedures or regulations for translating board policy and guidelines into programs and services.

To ensure a system of effective policy-making that allows school jurisdictions to make decisions that are in the best interests of their students, it is important that policies are developed in the priority areas identified in the long-term, multi-year strategic plan.

It is also important that, as appropriate, the board and the superintendent involve in the policy development process those people in the jurisdiction whom the policies will affect. One way to accomplish this objective is to form small project teams to develop selected aspects of policies. Another is to form ad hoc committees and to invite representation. Selected trustees and the superintendent should sit on such committees. Depending upon the policy area, committee members might also include principals, teachers, parents, students, or others as appropriate. For instance, if a policy on pupil transportation was being formulated, input or representation from bus drivers might be useful.

Consultation in the developmental stages of a policy generally assists in the policy's successful implementation. Consultation helps to ensure stakeholder commitment to and ownership of a policy. It also enables the board to remain responsive to unique local needs and circumstances.

c. Policy on Policy-Making

Another step in achieving an effective system of policy-making is to develop a policy on how to make policy. This "policy on policy-making" should establish the structure, principles and rules for the process. It should emphasize the necessity for board policy to be developed in compliance with legislation and government policy, and for appropriate situational factors to be taken into consideration. It should also be sufficiently detailed that it becomes a useful guide for all policy-making in the jurisdiction.

Examples of important ideas for the board and the superintendent to consider in the policy on policy-making include:

(1) That the development and adoption of new policies, the revision of existing policies, and the assignment of responsibility for the implementation of policies are primary responsibilities of the school board.

(2) That written policy constitutes one of the key means through which the board provides leadership and direction in the management of the school jurisdiction.

d. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Program Development

As evidenced by Alberta Education's Program Policy Manual, program development is closely related to policy development. Program development refers to the mechanisms and additional information needed to implement policy. It

includes items such as forms, legal information, manuals, advisory handbooks, and curriculum guides, necessary to the provision of programs and services.

In addition to ensuring the delivery of the provincially mandated Programs of Studies, program development also occurs in areas such as busing, operation and maintenance, and facilities. Generally speaking, the superintendent and other employees of the school jurisdiction are assigned responsibility for program development. However, the board has an initiation and an approval role, especially with respect to programs that meet unique, local needs. Such programs can be as diverse as providing hot lunches for pupils, academic decathlons and autonomous learning opportunities for exceptional students, or courses in religious education.

e. Major Outcomes

Generally, the results of policy and program development will be contained in a Policy/Program Manual. As the content of this manual has the approval of the board, it will be a legal document and enforceable. Because of this, the manual should address priority areas in a simple, short, straightforward manner. Its purpose is to serve as a guide to practice, while still enabling employees to exercise their professional judgement.

3. OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING

- Developing action plans and allocating adequate resources

a. Definition of Operational Planning and Budgeting

Operational planning involves the development of action plans to ensure that priorities, policies, and programs are implemented successfully. Budgeting involves the allocation of resources to achieve the successful implementation of action plans.

b. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Operational Planning and Budgeting

As executive officer, the superintendent has responsibility for providing information and for recommending action plans and budget alternatives to the board. This partnership between the board and the superintendent serves to ensure that a direct relationship exists among board policies, action plans, and the budget.

Of the administrative staff, the secretary-treasurer plays a crucial role in the financial aspect of operational planning and budgeting. Hence, for operational planning and budgeting to be effective, on-going cooperation between the superintendent and the secretary-treasurer is necessary.

Action plans outline objectives, the specific tasks, responsibilities, timelines, and resources necessary to implement a policy or program, as well as anticipated outcomes. They should be consistent with the vision statement, and with the long- and short-term goals and priorities established by the board.

It is not feasible to develop action plans for every activity of the school jurisdiction. However, action plans are required for priority initiatives and for new, highly significant, or controversial activities. The formulation of action plans occurs together with the development of the budget.

Since the budget reflects the intent of the school board, through the allocation of resources for educational programs, services, and other initiatives, open discussion during budget formulation can be helpful. As with other important aspects of management, the board may wish to delineate budget processes which actively involve administrative and teaching staff and, as appropriate, the public.

c. Summary of Operational Planning and Budgeting Process

The following eight steps summarize the operational planning and budgeting process for school jurisdictions. The steps also emphasize the interactive nature of planning and budgeting and the need for teamwork between the superintendent and the secretary-treasurer.

(1) Developing key action plans, which include a review of the vision statement and the priority areas established in policy.

(2) Collecting and appraising information, which includes an examination of current programs, pupil enrolment projections, and a review of provincial and board policies.

(3) Determining available revenues, which include the calculation of provincial grants and the local taxation levy.

(4) Estimating program expenditures.

(5) Developing a program budget.

(6) Adopting the budget.

(7) Administering the budget.

(8) Auditing the budget.

4. IMPLEMENTING

- Putting the plan into operation

a. Definition of Implementation

Implementation entails putting into practice board policies and programs. The end result is the provision of a quality education and services to students.

b. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Implementation

The superintendent has primary responsibility for implementing the action plans. However, successful implementation is greatly enhanced if those affected by it are well-informed, understand the action plans and their objectives, have been involved in their development and, hence, are supportive.

Effective communication and consultation among the board, administrators, and all appropriate stakeholders is the key to securing this support. For instance, in the event of changes to an instructional program, or the temporary relocation of people due to the need to renovate facilities, the opportunity for discussion, representation on committees, and seminars should be provided, as appropriate, to principals, teachers, parents and students.

Support for a program or service is related frequently to the ability to deliver. As necessary, inservice should be provided to employees to ensure their understanding of new or modified programs or services. Such inservice should be purposeful, goal-oriented and directed at enhancing the education of students. Planning for inservice, reflecting this in the budget, and providing ongoing support to those carrying out the implementation is a clear indication of the board's priorities and its commitment to successful implementation.

5. MONITORING, EVALUATING, AUDITING, AND ADJUSTING

- Determining how well the policy/program is being implemented and adjusting as required

a. Definitions of Monitoring, Evaluating, Auditing, and Adjusting

The following definitions derive from the Management and Finance Plan literature.

(1) Monitoring is an on-going, systematic activity. It provides information for determining whether policies and programs are being implemented as planned, are meeting local and Provincial requirements, and are resulting in satisfactory or improved student achievement.

By setting performance standards and attending to performance indicators (e.g. achievement test and diploma examination results provincially, and attitudinal surveys and teaching effectiveness measures locally), a monitoring system can be developed both to validate the achievement of pre-determined goals and to identify problems.

(2) Evaluating is an in-depth, analytical activity designed to provide results on which judgements regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of a school jurisdiction's operations are based.

(3) Auditing is a systematic appraisal activity that examines the financial policies, practices, records, and activities of a school jurisdiction in order to determine their adequacy in relation to a pre-determined standard.

(4) Adjusting is the changing of policies and programs to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of a school jurisdiction's operations. Adjusting often occurs as a result of monitoring, evaluating, and auditing activities.

While it is a provincial requirement that students, teachers, programs, schools, and school systems be evaluated regularly, not every policy or program needs to be monitored, evaluated, and audited each year. Instead, short- and long-term priorities for these systematic activities should be outlined in the strategic plan, and resources allocated in the budget. However, as warranted by need and circumstances, the jurisdiction should also have the capacity to initiate emergent monitoring, evaluating, auditing, and adjusting activities.

Much of the information that derives from monitoring, evaluating, and auditing activities will reveal positive outcomes, processes, and actions, as well as leaders and champions, and new and innovative ways of doing things. Such successes should not only be publicized, but should be expanded upon. They can provide a substantive basis for improving the future quality of education.

b. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Monitoring

Monitoring is the responsibility of the superintendent and other senior administrators.

The following derive largely from Alberta Education's Policy/Program Monitoring Handbook. They summarize some of the purposes of monitoring.

(1) Indicates whether a program is being implemented in accordance with the mandatory requirements of Alberta Education and local policies.

(2) Validates the achievement of pre-determined performance standards for students, classes, schools, and school jurisdictions.

(3) Permits comparison of the extent to which program implementation is congruent with program design.

(4) Provides one basis for the adjustment of programs, which may include changes in the design of the program, or in the method of implementation.

(5) Provides one basis for the refining of policy at both local and Provincial levels.

(6) Indicates whether a full-scale evaluation of a program, or set of programs, is necessary.

(7) Provides an information base for identifying trends in program implementation and design.

(8) Helps to identify inservice needs for jurisdictions/schools.

(9) Provides information that enables a school jurisdiction to recognize its accomplishments.

Successes revealed by monitoring activities should be shared. Where monitoring activities reveal problems with policies, programs, or services, the superintendent works with the board, or other relevant individuals or agencies, to provide appropriate solutions.

c. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Evaluating

Essentially, the responsibility for evaluating is that of the superintendent and other senior administrators. It also includes the appropriate involvement of personnel from all levels of the system. Occasionally, however, as in the case of school system evaluation, there will be a need for external evaluators to be retained. It is suggested that the board and the superintendent, in cooperation with other stakeholders, establish a general policy in the area of evaluation. This should explain the relationship between the policy and program developers and those conducting evaluations.

Most of the purposes of monitoring apply equally well to evaluating. A similar set of judgements may be involved. However, because evaluating is intended to provide results on which judgements are made, the following summarizes purposes specific to that task:

(1) Determines if resources are being allocated wisely, resulting in effective, efficient operations that improve education for students.

(2) Determines whether the objectives for policies or programs have been achieved.

(3) Determines the appropriateness or responsiveness of specific policies or programs to local needs.

(4) Identifies accomplishments that can be publicized and augmented.

(5) Identifies shortcomings.

Policies, programs and services should be evaluated regularly, according to the priorities outlined in the strategic plan. The action plans and the budget should provide for this activity and should include the cost of retaining external evaluators, as required.

Because the results of evaluations provide one basis for making adjustments to a school jurisdiction's operation, it is extremely important that appropriate evaluative methods and qualified evaluators be employed. The board and the superintendent must ensure that stakeholders and evaluators hold a common understanding of the purpose of an evaluation. Clear terms of reference should be established prior to an evaluation, with the evaluators selecting methods, measures, criteria, and standards which are appropriate to the persons or to the programs and services being evaluated.

d. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Auditing

The secretary-treasurer has responsibility for the day-to-day financial operations of the school jurisdiction. A qualified, external auditing team performs the annual financial audit.

Auditing is essential since timely and accurate financial information is important for measuring the efficiency of policy and program implementation. Auditing involves collecting information to determine:

- compliance with legislative requirements;
- compliance with established policies, plans and procedures;
- the accuracy and sufficiency of the financial and managerial information generated; and,
- the effectiveness of the flow of accounting information.

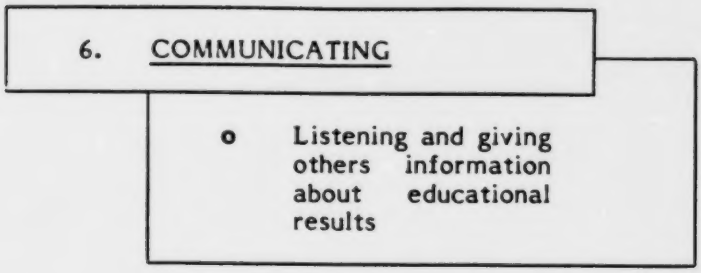
The above information will be generated as a result of the day-to-day financial monitoring activities of the secretary-treasurer, and the annual financial audit.

e. Responsibility for and Dimensions of Adjusting

Monitoring, evaluating, and auditing often provide the basis for making adjustments and improvements. For this reason, adjusting flows logically from this component of the cycle.

Responsibility for adjusting corresponds with responsibility for the stage or stages of the Management of Education Cycle to which adjustments are directed. If a transportation review reveals a need for change, stages 2, 3, and 4 of the cycle will be affected. Thus, policies, action plans and resource allocations will need to be formulated or revised, and an appropriate implementation plan will have to be designed and put into practice.

Being able to make adjustments to appropriate components of the Management of Education Cycle results in the jurisdiction's remaining responsive to its constantly changing internal and external environments. While the adjustments may be relatively small scale, they may also be significant, resulting in the addition or elimination of entire programs or schools, the changing of policies, or modification of the vision statement.



a. Definition of Communicating

Communicating is the process by which meaningful information is exchanged. It may be effected through newsletters, advertising, and the media. However, communicating is more than print and media. To be effective, it should also be based upon face-to-face interactions that are characterized by openness, trust, and mutual respect.

b. Overview of Educational Communication Practices for Board Members

Communicating is essential at each and every point in the Management of Education Cycle. It links the components of the cycle. It also ensures the continuing responsiveness of the vision statement and of policies, programs, and services to unique, changing and evolving local needs. Communication among the board members, the superintendent, other board employees, parents, students, and the electorate is essential. It is also essential that communication be a two-way process, consisting of both information gathering, through active listening, and information giving. School boards require a carefully planned communication program both to assure taxpayers of the value they are receiving for their educational dollars and to manage the media effectively.

An Alberta School Trustees' Association publication, entitled "Communication Handbook," lists means by which school jurisdictions can improve educational communication. The suggestions listed are practical and illustrate the importance of face-to-face communication, in addition to more traditional methods of communication such as newsletters. In Alberta, the provincially required Annual Education Report has also proved to be an effective communication vehicle.

Communication is crucial to realizing the jurisdiction's vision statement and, hence, ensuring the provision of a quality education to students. Open and constructive discussion and active involvement of stakeholders is essential and has been addressed in each component of the Management of Education Cycle. Such discussion allows all components of the cycle to be used in a dynamic, responsive manner.

C. Summary of Responsibility of the Board in the Management of Education Cycle

The board is charged with overall responsibility for directing the management of education within the school jurisdiction, and is accountable for the performance of each of its employees. To this end, the board's roles can be defined as legislative, judicial, and evaluative. The legislative role includes strategic planning and policy-making; the judicial and evaluative roles include, respectively, the hearing of appeals and employment decisions made with respect to personnel.

As executive officer, the superintendent provides leadership to the board and helps to coordinate the strategic planning, policy and program development processes. The superintendent works with the board in these areas, presenting the recommendations on which it will base its decision-making. Through this process, direction is provided, priorities are established, and policy is developed to assist the jurisdiction in achieving its preferred future. This policy creates the framework within which the board's employees perform their duties.

The superintendent and the administrative staff are assigned responsibility for operational planning and budgeting, implementing, and monitoring, evaluating, auditing, and adjusting. They establish the management structures and processes that enable board policies and programs to be put into practice. However, because of its ultimate responsibility, the board must remain aware of initiatives taken at each stage of the management cycle. One way to accomplish this is for a board member to serve, for a specified period of time, on a committee established for a particular task. This forges communication links between the board and its employees. It is important because communicating is an integral part of trusteeship.

Board members must communicate effectively not only with their colleagues on the board and with the jurisdiction's employees but also with the many publics who have a stake in education. The preparation by school jurisdictions of the Annual Education Report, press releases, and newsletters, is important in this process. These complement face-to-face, two-way communication. Through effective communication the board can be assured that the Management of Education Cycle is being used dynamically and in response to local needs.

D. Summary of Primary Responsibility Areas and Examples of Major Outcomes of the Management of Education Cycle

COMPONENT	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY	EXAMPLES OF MAJOR OUTCOMES
STRATEGIC PLANNING	o Trustees	o Long-term, Multi-year Plan (vision, goals, priorities statements)
DEVELOPING REQUIRED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS	o Trustees	o Policy Manual o Program Advisory Handbooks
OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING	o Superintendent o Secretary-treasurer	o Action plans for selected priority areas (objectives, timelines, responsibilities) o Budget
IMPLEMENTING	o Superintendent o Principals o Teachers o Others, as appropriate	o Implementation plans for specific programs and initiatives (day-to-day activities, responsibilities)
MONITORING, EVALUATING, AUDITING, AND ADJUSTING	o Superintendent o External evaluators o Secretary-treasurer o External auditors o Others, as appropriate	o Monitoring reports o Evaluation reports o Annual Audited Financial Statement o Changes to policies and programs
COMMUNICATING	o Trustees o Employees of jurisdiction	o 2-way communications regarding any of above (newsletters, bulletins, videos, surveys, face-to-face communications) o Annual Education Report